

in each of those areas, how interconnected those facts are. All of those regions have their differences. They are significantly different. But certainly the progress in one area helps progress in another, and lack of progress in one signals lack of progress in the other. And I certainly saw evidence of this in all three places where I visited. And, as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words and I do have several pictures that I would like to share with the House this evening and I will be doing that.

First, in Afghanistan. The battle in Afghanistan is clearly interconnected in so many ways with our relationships with our NATO allies. In fact, in Afghanistan, probably in early 2004, just as the NATO handover was beginning, there was a lot of optimism that our NATO partners were engaging in this and NATO is going to function as an alliance. After 9/11, NATO activated article 5 for the first time in its history: An attack on one country was equivalent to an attack on all countries, and we would all respond in kind. So America had been attacked, and here in early 2004 with the arrival of the German troops, we saw the beginnings of the NATO alliance coming and bringing its full weight to bear in Afghanistan. Now it hasn't worked out quite the way we had all hoped it would have, because some of our NATO allies are somewhat recalcitrant, and they really need to begin thinking long term about the stability and the impact of stability in the Middle East and how that impacts the security of the world at large. It is not just for that one narrow area of the world; it is much more widespread.

Now, no question about it, American, British, Canadian, Dutch, and Polish soldiers are doing great work and they are fighting against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan. Other areas with other components of the NATO alliance, it is not working quite the same way. In many ways it is regarded as a humanitarian mission rather than a military exercise. But I must stress, this is not a humanitarian mission, it is still a military exercise. Until the Taliban and the resurgent elements of al Qaeda are repulsed and removed, it will remain a military exercise. And the future of NATO depends on how well each of those individual countries could work together through this admittedly very difficult period. If we act together in strength, if we act as an alliance, I don't think there is any doubt that ultimately success will come. But if the activity continues to be fractured, the work becomes much more difficult; and the results will be fractured, the alliance is at risk and, as a consequence, the enemy will be emboldened. That's a shame. Because, remember, the Taliban in Afghanistan is not a popular insurgency. These are individuals who have been seen as oppressive and repressive. When they were thrown off, it was great jubilation by the people in Afghanistan, and there

is no joy in bringing the Taliban back into people's lives. The Taliban does employ military age males more or less as day laborers, puts a gun in their hand and gives them a charge to do something. But the reality is, if there were other work available, these individuals would just as soon be doing other work and feeding their families in other ways because, again, the Taliban is not a popular insurgency.

One of the things that of course was stressed a great deal in our visit in Afghanistan, our visits with General Rodriguez at the Bagram Air Base was all of the activity that takes place along the border. And certainly, when we went into Pakistan, those same themes were played out again. Not surprisingly, the perspective of the individuals, military generals in Afghanistan, was a little bit different from the political leaders in Pakistan. Suffice it to say there is a lot of activity going on along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and we see reports of this in our newspapers from time to time. There has been an increase in military activity on our part in some of those areas, and I think that is a good thing. I think they have removed some people who were continuing to cause great harm in the area. But at the same time, as we saw in the trip in Pakistan, it creates some difficulties in other areas.

Now Pakistan had just completed a rather large and historic election when we arrived there on February 22. President Musharraf, who had been the leader of Afghanistan, was a military general. Of course in 1999 he was responsible for a coup and deposed the prime minister, Sharif. President Musharraf has pretty much been the single and solitary ruler in Pakistan now for the last 7 or 8 years. His party lost a majority of seats in the parliament in the last parliamentary election. We did meet with President Musharraf. He was quick to point out that he had won his election the October before, so it wasn't about him not winning an election, it was about the elections in parliament. And Mr. Musharraf I think correctly pointed out, as did other leaders that we talked with, that the good news out of the election was it certainly was a repudiation of the more radical Islamist elements, that there was some concern that they were going to gain a greater foothold in the Pakistani parliament. And, in fact, the party of Benazir Bhutto, now under the hands of her husband, Mr. Zardari, had won the majority of seats, the People's Party of Pakistan had won the greatest number of seats in parliament and it appeared very likely at the time we were there that he would indeed put together a coalition government with Mr. Sharif, the former prime minister, and that would then be the ruling coalition in Pakistan.

The fate of Mr. Musharraf was at that time still pretty much in the balance. There had been a Senatorial delegation in just a few days before we

were through who had suggested, I think it was in the newspapers phrased as a graceful exit. Mr. Musharraf recognized and there was acceptance and recognition that his role of necessity was going to change, but at the same time this is an individual who does care a great deal about his country and, of course, he has been a good ally and friend to the United States. And Mr. Musharraf did feel very strongly that he wanted to continue to play a role in the stability of his country. Mr. Musharraf's perspective of the border areas, the federally administered tribal areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan was again a little bit different from General Rodriguez's over in Pakistan. From Mr. Musharraf's perspective, they had been pursuing a good deal of military options. Not all of those had been successful and there was a concern on the part of the Pakistani military whether or not they were in fact actually trained and equipped to follow through with those missions, and certainly training and equipping the Pakistani army is something where the United States may continue to play a role for some time, though I would stress that the actual military presence in Pakistan is very, very minimal.

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But the federally administered tribal area has become very problematic from the standpoint of terrorism. It is where the Taliban exists and where the remnants of al Qaeda are hiding out, and there are attempts to regroup and retake territory within the country of Afghanistan, and clearly it is an area that deserves a great deal of attention.

Mr. Speaker, I did promise to show some pictures. This is a picture of myself and Senator HUTCHISON from Texas meeting with Mr. Zardari. This is Benazir Bhutto's widow. We were that day in Pakistan discussing the role his coalition government would play in the future.

At the time we were there, it was not settled who the new prime minister would be. Obviously it would be someone who was elected in the People's Party of Pakistan because they held the largest number of seats in the Parliament. Mr. Zardari is someone I had never met before. In our discussions, he said all of the right things and in the right way. Obviously, in any situation like this, the follow-through is what is critical, so the next several weeks and months are critical for the stability of the country of Pakistan.

But Mr. Zardari was very gracious to have us into his home and meet with us. Remember, just a few short weeks before he had undergone a fairly wrenching personal episode with the loss of his wife after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, and they appeared to be doing their best to recover as a family. And now, given the additional responsibilities of the governance of Pakistan, but he did seem to be growing into that role, and I will tell you that was reassuring to watch that.